WORLD CHRONICLE

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PROGRAMME: **"WORLD CHRONICLE"**

GUEST: Maurice Strong, Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development

JOURNALISTS: Ian Steele, Press Foundation of Asia
Judy Lessing, Radio New Zealand
Moses Schonfeld, Fairchild Broadcast News

MODERATOR: Michael Littlejohns

SYNOPSIS

Maurice Strong, Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development to be held in Brazil in 1992, discusses ways to engage developing countries in the efforts to protect the global environment. He says the key issue is to give developing nations access to new technologies that are less detrimental to the local and global environment under conditions they can afford. The satisfactory resolution of this issue is one of the main objectives of the 1992 Conference.

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VOICE From United Nations Headquarters in New York, this is **World Chronicle**, an unedited interview programme about major global issues. Here now to introduce our guest is the host of today's **World Chronicle**.

LITTLEJOHNS: I'm Michael Littlejohns and this is **WORLD CHRONICLE.**

Alarmed by the rapid deterioration of the global environment, world leaders, at the 44th United Nations General Assembly, decided to convene a conference on Environment and Development in Brazil in 1992. What are the key issues to be discussed at the Conference and why is it taking so long to prepare for it?

Our guest today, Maurice Strong of Canada, is Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. In 1972, he played the same role at the Stockholm Conference which stimulated global awareness of the environmental issues. Mr. Strong will be interviewed here at United Nations Headquarters in New York by: Ian Steele of the Press Foundation of Asia; Judy Lessing of Radio New Zealand; and Moses Schonfeld of Fairchild Broadcast News.

For some background information, here's a report from our correspondent Steve Whitehouse:

WHITEHOUSE: Industrial development and modern technologies have improved the standard of living for many, but at a high cost. The quality of our living environment continues to worsen.

Polluted air and smog is a common sight. Gases from burning fossil fuels, motor vehicles, and factories enter the atmosphere, creating the greenhouse effect, causing temperatures to rise. Acid rain, another environmental problem created by man, is destroying lakes, rivers and their ecosystems.

Antarctica, man's last environmental frontier. It's important not only for its marine life and natural wealth, but also for its weather, which affects directly the global climate. It was above the frozen southern continent that scientists discovered a hole the size of the United States in the protective ozone layer. It's led to more ultra-violet light, adding to the risks of skin cancer, crop failure and weather extremes.

Forests, once considered a limitless resource, are shrinking at an unprecedented rate. One reason -- the felling of trees to create farmland. A problem particularly acute in developing countries is deforestation for firewood, a daily necessity.

Industrial waste is causing extensive environmental damage. Its disposal is becoming a major concern of the international community. Many feel our planet's environment is at a critical juncture. Pollution is everywhere -- in the air, in the water, on land. Can economic expansion that generates pollution at present rates continue? Will the rich world make available the money and knowledge needed for the Third World to industrialize in a way that doesn't harm the environment?

All these questions will be on the agenda when the world meets in Brazil in 1992 for a world conference on environment and development. Is time running out for global action?

LITTLEJOHNS: Mr. Strong, let me repeat that question, is time running out for global action and if so can the world afford to wait until June 1992 to tackle the problems of environment and development at the conference in Brazil?

STRONG: Well, certainly time is running out and that's the reason why the General Assembly of the UN has convened the conference, not to postpone action until '92 but to ensure that there is an acceleration of the kind action we need. Action is underway now on many fronts but that action is not getting the kind of impetus that it needs and the importance of '92 is to translate the heightened public awareness of the issues and the heightened political interest in them into the kind of commitments to continued and future action that really will determine the future of our planet.

LITTLEJOHNS: How is it intended that the conference should bring this about? Are they going to adopt a series of declarations, resolutions? Is there going to be a plan of action, are technical studies going to be reviewed and proposals made to governments? How is the thing going to be done?

STRONG: The Stockholm Conference in '72 really had the job of raising public awareness and putting the issue on the global agenda for developing countries as well as industrialized countries. We've moved a great deal since then. Our understanding of the issues has increased, the symptoms of continued deterioration of our planet have become far more prominent and we are now at the stage where the 1992 conference

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has got to impart a whole new commitment to action. The particular actions that the conference will take are already underway. They call for binding international agreements to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to try to roll back the mounting risks of climate change. The negotiations are already underway but they're proceeding too slowly. They need a new political impetus which the conference process will give them. The same is true of the whole ozone issue. The United Nations Environment Programme presided over a process which resulted in a Protocol of Montreal to reduce chlorofluorocarbon emissions but it's quite clear that is not adequate, that much more and much quicker action is needed and again, one of the objects is to ensure that that produces an extended international agreement on chlorofluorocarbons. The same is true of the vital issue of biodiversity. That seems maybe remote from people's immediate here and now interests but the biological resources of our planet on which we depend in a whole variety of ways for our health, and our wellbeing, and our survival, are seriously threatened and every day experiencing the loss of species of plant and animal life that are absolutely vital to the continuance of human life. We have got to reverse that and these are just some very specific areas where international agreements need to be reached and the conference provides the basis for that and hopefully, will accelerate the process of reaching those agreements by at least several years, and this has to happen.

STEELE: Mr. Strong, during the 1980s the Western donor countries went along with United Nations conferences pretty much on the understanding that they would discuss the issues but wouldn't commit themselves to the follow-up which of course has been a problem for the developing world. You've made it very clear that the 1992 conference has major cost implications for the donor countries, particularly in the

transfer of resources -- financial resources and technological resources -- do you have any commitment from the industrialized world that this is going to be a different conference, that there will be a financial follow-up to this?

STRONG: Well, the industrialized countries certainly entered into this conference and participated in the vote of the General Assembly which created it with the clear understanding that substantial additional resources were going to be required, primarily from them, to deal with the issues, that the developing countries which certainly share the same concerns but don't share the same priorities that we have, are going to absolutely require substantial and sustained additional resources to enable them to allow for the environmental dimension in their own economic development. After all, for them economic development is an absolute priority. Most of them are faced with the day-by-day struggle for survival which really makes the prospects of global warming and ozone problems seem very distant and remote from them and we also have to recognize that we can't act without them and we can't expect them to join us unless they can share the benefits that our technological civilization produces as well as it's risks.

STEELE: Technology is going to play a major role in this conference obviously. The transfer of cleaner industries and processes obviously we don't want the same industrial revolution in the developing world that we had in the developed world, how do you bring together the interests of governments to make those changes in the interests of the patent holders which obviously are investing a lot of research and development effort into new and cleaner technologies and will want something for those technologies? They won't want to just give them away. Do you envisage some mechanism for the transfer of technology to

developing countries? Could you share some of your thoughts on that?

STRONG: Indeed, that is one of the prime issues that the conference will be facing and again, it is I think generally recognized that we all have an interest in ensuring the broadest possible access by developing countries to technologies that are environmentally sound and the best possible available. Clearly you can't expect those who own the technologies to give them away or they won't have the incentive or the means to continue to produce new technological change, so a way has to be devised of making them freely available, or available at least on a highly subsidized basis, to the developing countries without impairing the incentive of those who own them to continue to produce new technological changes and that really means funding. It means that there needs to be some basis for funding of the transfer of technology and again it's in our interest. This is not the traditional giveaway syndrome of a foreign aid programme, this is absolutely imperative to our security and we simply have to find a means of doing it and the conference has as one of its main focuses the development of international agreements to produce those means.

LESSING: Mr. Strong, there's a phrase that goes around the United Nations almost every time any major topic comes up and that's political will, how do you judge the political will now, internationally, on this really vital global question?

STRONG: Well, 1992 will provide in my view a supreme test of the political will of the nations of the world and in particular the industrialized nations because at a high level of generality the political leaders of the industrialized world are recognizing the importance of these issues and indeed

even recognizing the need for them to do something special to help the developing world. That has not yet been translated into concrete commitments of the kind that will actually make those newer resources available. One of the principal jobs we face between now and 1992 in Brazil is to translate that general awareness at the highest political levels into concrete commitments. It's going to be a tough job.

LESSING: Have you got ideas about how you could stimulate that? It's one thing to make pretty speeches and the words are very fine but to translate that into action?

STRONG: No, that is the answer. I'm not one who deprecates words. When I hear politicians making statements that are positive towards our problems, understanding that we do need to act, that isn't the same as action but it's a pretty good beginning and it does give us something, give their constituents the basis for holding them accountable. Now, between now and 1992, we've got to be both imaginative and persistent, imaginative in the sense of realizing that budgets of all countries are under stress today. We have to think of new and additional means of producing the resources on a consistent basis that are going to be needed to satisfy the proper demands of the developing countries for the kind of resource flows they need. We're a long way from that. Two years is a very, very short period in which to effect the fundamental transition in political will that we're going to require but we've got to do it, we've got to create, we've got to continue to get to the politicians and to their constituents with good, hard facts, with hard costing -- not just generalities about we need more money, but specifically we need it for this and here's what it will do and here's why it represents an essential investment for your country.

LITTLEJOHNS: The programme is WORLD CHRONICLE. Our guest is Maurice Strong, Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development.

SCHONFELD: Mr. Strong, you cited earlier the Montreal Protocol on the Ozone, that should be a good case whereby you might judge whether the implementation of that convention has worked and to what degree it's failed. I mean there are alarm bells being sounded around the world today about the ozone -- skin cancer coming from exposure to the sun. Mankind as a whole has to revive its attitude towards exposure. Now, here's a good case history that could be applied to see whether there aren't new tightenings needed in this new conference you expect in only in two years from now to assure that what is decided then is applied and implemented and maybe monitored.

STRONG: No, that's absolutely correct. The Montreal Protocol represented a major step forward in the international co-operation required to deal with the ozone issue and it can't be dealt with except through international co-operation. No country, the United States however powerful it is cannot deal with the ozone problem alone, however that step is an inadequate step. It's implementation is still in doubt. The resources available to help developing countries make the transition from the use of chlorofluorocarbons for example for refrigeration when they're just at the beginnings of the process by which their people have access to refrigeration, to ask them to give up refrigeration is simply not feasible. What we have to do is make it possible for them to adapt the substitutes that will permit them to go ahead and enjoy some of the benefits that we have enjoyed and in enjoying have created risks for them too.

LITTLEJOHNS: Are the substitutes much more costly, Mr. Strong?

STRONG: Well, they're just in the process of being developed. They will be more costly as far as they are concerned yes because they will be new, they will be additional new technology and the transition to the use of that new technology will be an expensive transition. However, we cannot immunize ourselves from the risk of continued deterioration of the ozone unless they join us in this commitment and they can't be expected to join us unless we help them in the process.

SCHONFELD: Again, looking at the resolution of the General Assembly which gave you the authority to act as Secretary-General, it looks like a tall order. In fact it's like the Ten Commandments with at least ten points. One of them strikes me particularly and that is the ocean waste, the garbage that is dumped in the oceans. I mean many of us can't utilize, even around the American shores and rivers and lakes, the waters because of the misuse and abuse. Do you see any foreseeable steps to make those waters pure and usable again?

STRONG: Absolutely. I think water issues are going to move very much into the centre of our agenda in the next decade or so. It will be one of the key issues at the '92 conference. The basic data is very ominous when we consider that not only will the world's population increase but even more importantly, in the next few decades, the human activity is going to accelerate several times more rapidly than the increase in population and that's going to impose immense new demands on a whole variety of resource systems including of course the water systems and the water systems are already at the point in which in many cases water supplies, both in quality and in quantity, are seriously threatened. We're going to see a lot of water-related conflict in the next decade or so, so this is an issue that is going to be very, very key in '92 and it will have to be one we just don't talk about but one in which we have some very, very concrete step towards international agreement in dealing with them.

LITTLEJOHNS: I read somewhere that water could become more expensive or at least as expensive as oil, have you heard that theory?

STRONG: I've heard that. In some cases it's already expensive. The whole South West of the United States is a basic drought area, an area of low rainfall, low water resources where the growth has been made possible by exploitation of water resources that originate up in the Rocky Mountain area but around the world you have the same problem. In many areas water is not only more expensive but simply much less available at any cost.

STEELE: Mr. Strong, public interest in the environment is well developed in the Western countries and there's no doubt that there is a constituency. The issue of development is less well-known yet this is a conference about environment and development. There's a great risk isn't there of development being swamped by environment concerns. How will you establish a balance to link the two concerns? Technology is one issue, are there other ways in which the conference will bring the two together?

STRONG: Well, the conference is a conference on environment and development and it's not two separate subjects, it recognizes that these two are intimately and inextricably related. It is through the whole process of economic growth and development that we in fact have our impacts on the environment and on the other side of that the environment is one of the principal resources for development and constraints on development, and indeed, the environment in which we live is a principal product of the development process. So, in every area of our agenda these two issues are going to be linked and the results that are produced are going to demonstrate the practical ways in which they must be linked in the period ahead.

LESSING: Mr. Strong, as you prepare for the conference, it's just over two years off now, how are you taking into account the very special concerns of small countries? I'm thinking for example of island countries in the Caribbean or the Indian Ocean or the Pacific. For instance, if the sea level rises some of those countries are going to be left with very little land, they may even be wiped out.

STRONG: That's right. No, this is a very major issue. When the World Commission on Environment and Development report was presented to the General Assembly by then Prime Minister Brundtland, its Chairman, of Norway, the President of the Maldives got up and said, "Look, this is already happening in our country. It's not theoretical. Our country is already experiencing real threats to its existence." And this is true of low-lying areas around the world and the small countries simply don't have the resources to deal with it alone. It has to become a major subject of co-operative international action.

LITTLEJOHNS: A country like the Netherlands could be wiped out I suppose?

STRONG: It could be but the fact that the Netherlands has had this problem for ages has also produced a response. The Netherlands is probably the country best equipped in the world to deal with intrusions from the ocean. Their technology, their experience will be needed in their own country yes but will also be widely needed around the world. However, these measures are expensive. Most poor countries can't afford them.

LITTLEJOHNS: But the alternative is to be wiped out?

STRONG: The alternative is to be wiped out and at a time when the borders of the world are closing, where mass migrations of population are no longer feasible. This is going to create a whole new set of stresses and strains in areas that are threatened by ecological calamity. This is only one manifestation of the fact that we're going to have a lot of environmental refugees around the world, not only because of the intrusion of the oceans but for a lot of other reasons.

SCHONFELD: Mr. Strong, the issue of monitoring is I think a very significant, sensitive item because when you just observe your neighbour violating pollution rules and dumping his garbage into a stream, the countries very much involved in that kind of behaviour have to be somehow cautioned and somehow brought into line. Is there any machinery that you could envisage that might be applied so that the world community knows that any decision made at this upcoming conference is abided by?

STRONG: One of the things that we need to do, and this has been recognized by important governments, for example that of the Soviet Union, that we really need now to move to more enforceable regimes of international law. Many international agreements really are agreements for which there is no enforcement power, no sanction except the sanction of international public opinion. We're going to have to move beyond that on some of these issues because frankly they threaten the life of our planet. They are real threats to the security of the whole world population and we've got to start taking them as seriously as we've always taken threats to national security. We've got to stop thinking of these issues as marginal issues and can we really afford them and start looking at them the way we've always looked at threats to our own national security, as a priority issue where the real question is simply how do we deploy and how do we raise the

resources to deal with it and in doing that we'll create a whole new generation of opportunity also. Remember the defense industries which are now in recession, fortunately for many good reasons, also produced a lot of jobs, a lot of useful technology, important research and new products.

SCHONFELD: In medicine especially.

STRONG: Well, that's right. We have to look at this as the new generation of security risks and we have to respond by creating the resources that we need, not just asking can we afford it? We can't afford not to do this and in doing it I think we're going to open up a whole new generation of creativity, both in the public sector and in the private sector.

STEELE: There's been quite an extraordinary rush by agencies and organizations of one kind or another to get on board the environmental bandwagon. Many of them have common views, many of them have conflicting views, is this conference going to try to draw together these various elements? Will there be a forum for the many different points of view? How will the conference bring those elements and the non-governmental organizations in particular into the picture?

STRONG: Well, as you know the non-governmental organizations, the voluntary associations, the citizen groups have played a tremendous part in raising public awareness and in stimulating political action and they have shown immense interest in this conference. They're already organizing themselves to create a great congress of the peoples of the earth, an earth conference at the Brazil conference at the same time and to provide support and impetus to the decision-making process at the official level and that will be preceded by a whole host of events at the national and regional level around

the world. So their participation throughout the whole process of preparing for the conference and at the conference itself will be an extremely important factor in its success.

LITTLEJOHNS: Mr. Strong, will all the governments in the world, including non-Member States of the United Nations be represented at this conference in Brazil?

STRONG: Absolutely. I think this will be I would think the most well attended conference of any kind. We can see that even in our preparatory committee, which is a committee of the whole General Assembly, which means that all the members of the United Nations, virtually every nation on earth is part of the process.

LITTLEJOHNS: That includes South Africa?

STRONG: South Africa as a member of the United Nations, yes.

LITTLEJOHNS: Mr. Strong, that's all the time we have. Thank you for joining us on this edition of **WORLD CHRONICLE**.

Our guest has been Maurice Strong, Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. He was interviewed here at United Nations Headquarters in New York by: Ian Steele of the Press Foundation of Asia; Judy Lessing of Radio New Zealand; and Moses Schonfeld of Fairchild Broadcast News.

I'm Michael Littlejohns. Thank you for joining us. We invite you to be with us for the next edition of **WORLD CHRONICLE**.

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Transcripts of the programme may be obtained free of charge by sending a stamped, self-addressed envelope to: WORLD CHRONICLE, United Nations, Room S-837, New York, New York 10017, USA.

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